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ALEXANDER AKALOVSKY, interpreter for Vice President Nixon in Russia, with his wife, MARIA, and their children, IREN, ELAINE and ALEXANDER JR. The children already speak Russian.

Alexander Akalovsky Found It Took Quick Elbow Jabs Just to Keep Near Vice President in Crowds

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ALEXANDER AKALOVSKY, who served as interpreter for Vice President Richard M. Nixon on his recent trip to the Soviet Union, needs all the rest he can get these days.

For with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev scheduled to visit the United States next month and with President Eisenhower to reciprocate with a trip to the Soviet Union, a Russian-speaking interpreter is likely to be as popular and as necessary in the months ahead as a stag line at a sorority dance.

Akalovsky, who knows his way about in almost a dozen foreign languages, has been given no official indication whether he will be assigned to the Eisenhower-Khrushchev meetings. "But a lot of people have been telling me I'd better get a lot of rest in a hurry, if that means anything," he said to this reporter with a grin.

Akalovsky, highly educated as he is, got a new kind of education when he served as interpreter for Nixon.

As crowds of curious Russians, friendly but vigorous, pressed about the Vice President wherever he appeared, Akalovsky, a mild-mannered, courteous sort, found himself in danger of being isolated from his chief.

Quickly he learned the rough-and-ready, if undiplomatic, techniques of surviving in a mob. With a resourcefulness the State Department could be proud of, the interpreter found the knack of pushing and shoving his way through eager spectators, of keeping his feet from being crushed beneath heavy Russian boots, of nimbly sidestepping enthusiastic bear hugs and of shouting when necessary. Above all, he learned the value of a sharp elbow jab to the ribs of those who tried to get between him and Nixon.

"One simply had to use one's elbows, that's all there was to it," he remarked today with a faint air of surprise at himself.

Using one's elbows somehow seems out of character for Akalovsky. A native of Yugoslavia but of Russian parentage, he gives the impression of a pleasant, reserved but somewhat worldly college professor. There is a slight European touch to his voice, reflecting the Slavic languages in which he is expert. At 35 his hair is thinning slightly. Rather heavy-lensed glasses add to his scholarly appearance. He is slender, of average height and like many State Department employes, dresses well in the subdued, striped-tie tradition.

Seated in the comfortable living room of the apartment in Arlington, Va., across the broad Potomac river from Washington, where he, his wife and their three young children live, Akalovsky recalled some of the more trying experiences of his two-week tour of Russia and Poland.

There was the famous "kitchen debate" Nixon staged with Khrushchev at the American exhibit in Moscow.

"People were milling all about," Akalovsky related. "Several times Mr. Nixon and Mr. Khrushchev had to wait until I could break through the crowd to interpret what one or the other had said." There was that well-placed elbow.

As the two officials toured the exhibit, they kept up a running exchange.

"Their conversation was extremely rapid," Akalovsky remarked. "Reporters who were trying to take notes on the discussion kept shouting for me to talk louder so they could hear what was being said.

"People were pressing from all sides. Why," he exclaimed in some amazement, "you should have seen my shoes. All scuffed up."

Khrushchev's fondness for idiomatic expressions and maxims didn't make things any easier.

AKALOVSKY found the trip to Russia provided a new kind of education.

either. In disparaging some of the kitchen gadgets in the American model home as being too complex, the Russian leader sarcastically used a phrase that means: "The best way to get rid of bedbugs is to pour hot water in their ears."

Akalovsky deftly put this into meaningful English by translating it as, "Why use simple methods when you can use complicated ones?"

When the conversation turned to ballistic missiles, Khrushchev boastfully but idiomatically uttered an expression that was completely untranslatable. The Russian interpreter who was present was stumped as he attempted a literal translation. Akalovsky came to his rescue with a suggestion that the sense of the phrase was, "We'll show you."

Soviet newspapers attributed the initial failure to translate the expression, not to the Soviet interpreter, but to Akalovsky. At a reception later the American gleefully ribbed the Russian reporters about their "non-objectivity," a term the Russians like to apply to others.

Nixon gave his interpreter a difficult phrase in a speech at Novosibirsk when he paid tribute to the city's "pioneer spirit." The word pioneer has come to have a special connotation in Russian since it is part of the name of a youth organization somewhat like the Boy Scouts. To avoid any misunderstanding, Akalovsky gave an impromptu definition of the phrase as "the spirit of conquering new horizons," preserving perfectly the sense intended by the Vice President.

The most interesting part of the entire trip in Akalovsky's view was the stay at Khrushchev's country home near Moscow. Only a few officials were present. Removed from the ubiquitous crowds, Nixon and the Russian leader had intimate conversations that covered a wide range of topics. When the two officials went for a boat ride, Akalovsky served as interpreter for both men, a function he performed frequently during the trip.

The interpreter refused politely but firmly to be drawn into any evaluation of the officials he had observed at such close range. With typical State Department reserve, he said it would not be "appropriate."

Of Nixon he remarked tactfully: "It was easy to translate his remarks. His train of thought was always clear, logical and easy to follow."

Of the Soviet officials he encountered, he said with a shrug, "There were no great differences among them so far as translating was concerned. They all followed the same pattern. They are well indoctrinated. They use the same cliches."

Akalovsky found the Nixon tour the "most interesting and rewarding assignment" he has had in nearly four years as a State Department interpreter.

It was physically exhausting but from a linguistic standpoint, he said the tour was not nearly so difficult as some highly scientific conferences at which he has interpreted. In those cases the technical language used and the complex nature of the subject matter present special problems in translation.

Akalovsky can recall at least nine major international conferences at which he has served as an interpreter for the United States since joining the State Department's division of language services in the autumn of 1955.

Chief among them were the first session of the recently concluded Big Four Foreign Ministers Conference at Geneva, the atomic weapons meeting that is still under way at Geneva, the international disarmament conference in London in 1957 and the meeting that resulted in the current program of cultural exchanges between the United States and the Soviet Union.

American officials for whom he has interpreted include President Eisenhower, the late Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his successor, Christian Herter.

In addition to Khrushchev, high-ranking Russians whose remarks Akalovsky has translated include Frol R. Kozlov and Anastas I. Mikoyan, both recent visitors to the United States; Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko; the late Georgi Zarubin, former Ambassador to the United States; Valerian A. Zorin, Klementi Voroshilov and Georgi Zhukov.

Akalovsky has lost count of how many miles he has traveled on State Department business. "I used to keep a log," he remarked, "but I gave up after it got up to 50,000 miles."

Some measure of his globe-trotting is indicated by the fact that he has crossed the Atlantic ocean 16 times since 1956. In the last 28 months he has been away from home all but 11 months. One conference, alone, kept him away from the United States nearly eight months.

Now a naturalized American citizen, Akalovsky was born on Rab, a Yugoslavian island in the Adriatic Sea. His Russian-born parents taught him their native language. He attended private and public schools and was graduated from Heidelberg University in Germany.

While living in Yugoslavia, he learned Serbo-Croatian, the principal language of the country. In school, from private tutors and by personal study he gaid fluency in other Slavic languages—Polish, Czechoslovakian, Hungarian and Ukranian. He so mastered French, German, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese.

Upon his graduation frm Heidelberg, where he majod in French and German, Akalovsky and his parents came to the United States. That was during the 1949 recession "and it was difficult to get a job," he recalled.

For eight months he worked as a dietitian's aid at a hospital in San Francisco. Then in 1950 he became an instructor in Russian on the faculty of the Army Language School in Montrey, Calif. At the same time Akalovsky was learning a new language—English.

In 1955 a guest from the home town [illegible] brought him to a summer seminar in linguistics, the study of the historic development and structure of language, at Georgetown University here. He continued his studies for a year. Then his appointment to his present State Department post forced him to abandon his plans for an advanced degree.

Akalovsky and his attractive wife, Maria, have instilled an early acquaintance with languages in their children. The youngsters—Irene, 4½ years old, and Alexander Jr. and Elaine, 3-year-old twins—already speak Russian. Mrs. Akalovsky, like her husband, is of Russian descent. She is employed by the State Department as a secretary.

Akalovsky's eventual goal is to enter the diplomatic foreign service although right now his principal aim is to continue a brief vacation to recuperate from his exhausting Russian tour.

Today's Brain Game

FAMOUS COMPANIONS provide today's quiz subject. Six answers correct is excellent.

1. Can you name Peter Pan's fairy companion?
2. Of Marquette and Joliet, which was the missionary?
3. What two men first flew nonstop from Newfoundland to Ireland?
4. Katharina and Petruchio are in what famed play?
5. Who hung the signal lanterns for Paul Revere?
6. Can you name the "Three Musketeers"?
7. Can you name the shepherd who loved Chloe?
8. What is the last name of Penrod's friend, Sam?

ANSWERS

1. Tinker Bell. 2. Marquette. 3. John Alcock and A. W. Brown. 4. "Taming of the Shrew." 5. Robert Newman. 6. Aramis, Athos and Parthos. 7. Daphnis.